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City Releases Report on Blight Reduction Efforts

ROCKFORD, Ill. – The City of Rockford has released a report on its blight reduction efforts from the Center for Community Progress (Community Progress), a national nonprofit. Community Progress helped Rockford review its efforts to address property vacancy, abandonment and tax delinquency through a Technical Assistance Scholarship (TASP) awarded to Rockford in March 2016.

The assistance was awarded through a competitive application process. Proposed projects were reviewed on a range of criteria, including the potential for innovation from which other cities can learn, demonstrate leadership to implement reform, overall scale of vacancy challenges and need for outside assistance.

Rockford received assistance from a team of national experts over six months between March 2016 and September 2016. Assistance included a diagnosis of the most pressing problems including: key barriers to an effective and efficient code enforcement program, evaluation of current systems and strategies, the tax delinquent process and recommendations on solutions that involve key community decision makers, residents and other stakeholders. The project also emphasized the opportunity to better coordinate ongoing blight remediation efforts among various City departments, lenders, nonprofits and residents, while also supporting current owner-occupants and tenants in order to prevent further neighborhood decline. The primary local partners on the TASP project are the Community and Economic Development Department, Winnebago County Treasurers Office and a consortium of neighborhood organizations financial institutions and neighborhood stakeholders.

“Rockford has the strong leadership necessary to bring real, positive change to the city’s vacant, abandoned properties,” said Tamar Shapiro, president and CEO of the Center for Community Progress. “It’s our hope that the guidance provided through this technical assistance scholarship will help bring that change to fruition, improving quality of life for the city’s residents.”

Grant funding from JPMorgan Chase provides the majority of the program's support through the Community Progress.

"We appreciate the help from Community Progress and our local partners to build a comprehensive strategy," said Mayor Lawrence J. Morrissey. "This report will help guide our administrative and policy decisions and build more capacity to address problem properties."

Since its founding in 2010, the Center for Community Progress has provided technical assistance to more than 200 communities across 30 states. Community Progress launched TASP in early 2014 in response to two needs: first, the need to develop fresh approaches to problem properties that could become models for cities to replicate, and second, the need to provide individual cities with affordable, high-quality guidance in the fight to remediate blighted, vacant properties.

About Center for Community Progress

Founded in 2010, the Center for Community Progress is the only national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization solely dedicated to building a future in which entrenched, systemic vacancy, abandonment and blight no longer exists in American communities. The mission of Community Progress is to ensure that communities have the vision, knowledge, and systems to transform blighted, vacant, and other problem properties into assets supporting neighborhood vitality. As a national leader on solutions for blight and vacancy, Community Progress serves as the leading resource for local, state and federal policies and best practices that address the full cycle of property revitalization, from blight prevention, through the acquisition and maintenance of problem properties, to their productive reuse.

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